

November 20, 2012

Proposal to create a standing Forestry Subcommittee within the NRCS State Technical Committee (STC)

Purpose: to provide advice and recommendations to the State Conservationist regarding conservation programs and initiatives, such as EQIP, WHIP, CSP, New England/New York Forestry Initiative, and others that affect woodland owners and forest land in Maine.

Proposed membership: NRCS State Forester; Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, with representation from the Maine Forest Service, the State Soil Scientist, the Maine Natural Areas Program, and others; Maine Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife; Maine Association of Conservation Districts, and individual Conservation Districts as appropriate; University of Maine Cooperative Extension; private forestry consultants, including Stewardship Foresters and Forestry Technical Service Providers (TSPs); Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine (SWOAM), and other family woodland owners; Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA); and other interested individuals and organizations as deemed appropriate.

Justification: Maine is the most heavily forested state in the nation, on a per cent of land cover basis. Woodland owners are explicitly included as 'producers' with respect to Farm Bill conservation programs such as EQIP, WHIP and others. Local working groups have made great strides to include woodland owners and consulting foresters. Nevertheless forestry topics are rarely included in STC agendas. It is timely for the forestry community to have a larger presence at the STC level. With outstanding obligations for forestry contracts in the millions of dollars, it is prudent, if not vital, to provide the State Conservationist with pertinent feedback regarding technical and financial assistance to woodland owners.

Respectfully submitted by Andy Shultz, Landowner Outreach Forester, Maine Forest Service